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INFORMATION REPORT

COUNTRY Poland

SUBJECT Notes on the Polish Merchant Marine: Ship Information/
Call at Leningrad/Personnel of S/S TORUN/Attitudes of
Young Seamen/Coastal Living Conditions

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Ship Information

2. "In 1949 the s/s WISLA was carrying to Albania arms from Poland and cars from Czechoslovakia. It was said that the arms were for the insurgent Communist forces in Greece.
3. "In 1950 three Polish seamen escaped from s/s MIKOLAJ REJ in China. They hid on a [] ship. The officers and some crew members of the MIKOLAJ REJ boarded the [] ship, searched it by force and found the fugitives. They were sent back to Poland via the USSR and sentenced to four years of prison. However, they were released under the amnesty of 1951.
4. "In late 1951 the m/s OKAYWIE carried a crew of 21. The captain, Henryk Kowalski,
[]
5. "In summer 1952 the m/s ELBIAG carried a crew of 26. She is a former German ship that was sunk during World War II, salvaged by the Poles and repaired []
[] She is a fast vessel []
[] The Captain, (fnu) Goluszy

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On 20-22 July 1952 a representative from the ELBIAG took part in the rally of some 200,000 Polish stakhanov workers of both sexes in Warsaw. Prior to this rally the ZMP aboard the ELBIAG had to undertake the obligation to paint the ship's mess and reading room; the star painter went to Warsaw.

6. "In late 1952 the s/s WIELUN carried a crew of 26. The captain, (fnu) Gorski, was a prewar officer who knew his job and treated the crew fairly. The politruk, a Jew named (fnu) Bachowski, was a decent fellow. He wanted the ship to have a good reputation and urged the crew to fulfill its plan and 'social obligations' so that the WIELUN might earn the title of 'outstanding ship', but he did not press the crew unduly. Many of the 'social obligations' executed under his orders were quite ordinary. Thus, he would record a 'social obligation' when the crew cleaned the ship after a coal transport. This was actually a necessary routine job. The titles of 'outstanding ship' of the Polish merchant marine' or 'shockworker' are usually won by cheating. There were few active Communists in the WIELUN's crew. The 2nd mate and the 2nd engineer were CP members and talked like Communists, but this was a pretense so they could keep their jobs. The 1st mate, (fnu) Blachowski, did not belong to the CP and was very much liked by the crew.

Call at Leningrad

7. "In September 1952 the WIELUN called at Leningrad three days to load a shipment of grain. The ship arrived at Leningrad in the evening. The entire crew was ordered to the messroom, the door was locked and a Soviet armed guard posted outside. Two armed Soviet guards were posted on the quay. Then eight officers of the customs and currency control arrived - three women and five men. All the officers, save the captain, were ordered to the messroom and treated like the crew. Everybody's seaman's book was taken from him. Each man had to produce his money. The amount was noted, and before leaving Leningrad he had to produce it again. While the customs people were busy with the crew in the messroom, other Soviets searched the ship thoroughly. The next day the crew received their seaman's books back. They were told they might go ashore but were advised not to go alone. At two pm that day a Soviet man came and took everybody who was free on an excursion in the city. The seamen were driven in an antiquated bus to the Interklub to see the film 'The Fall of Berlin'. Then five Soviet girls arrived for dancing, but only old-fashioned dances and waltzes were allowed. The Poles were offered no refreshments, not even tea. The next day the seamen who were free were taken by bus to the Hermitage Museum; then they walked an hour through the city. The shop windows seemed to have more goods than shops in Poland. The prices for utility goods and plain food were lower than in Poland, but the luxuries and imported goods were a great deal more expensive. A coconut cost 35 rubles, a kilogram of bananas 28 rubles. The Poles learned from the dockworkers that they had a wage of 1000 rubles monthly. The Poles got the impression that life in Leningrad was cheaper than in Gdynia, but they could not buy anything because the Soviets offered them such a ridiculous exchange: eight rubles for two dollars or the price of a pack of cigarettes. Before leaving Leningrad the crew had to go through the same control procedure in the locked mess room.

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8. "Just before the WIELUN had left Szczecin for Leningrad, a Soviet ship had sailed from Szczecin with Polish grain for Leningrad.

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S/S TORUN PERSONNEL

9. "In early summer 1953 the s/s TORUN, 2900 tons, carried a crew of 26.

10. "Officers:

Captain

Edek Branczewski

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Politrak Konstanty Zoran1st mate Włodzimierz Dronak2nd mate Jan Szader3rd mate (fnu) Nawrocki1st engineer (fnu) Gruszkowski

2nd engineer

3rd engineer (fnu) Berne

11. "The CP cell on the TORUN has five members. The secretary is (fnu) Unton, a stoker. The others are stoker Władysław Lebiński, 2nd mate Jan Szader, the cook (fnu) Leontieff, (from East Poland, speaks bad Polish), and the politruk (fnu) Zoran. The ZMP chairman on the TORUN is Leszek Krol.
12. "Seaman (fnu) Jastrzebski works in the security section (Komórka Ochrony) of PZM (Polska Żegluga Morska) at Szczecin.

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Young Seamen's Attitudes

13. "The young seamen on the ships of PZM (Polska Żegluga Morska) are with very few exceptions members of the ZMP. Most of them join because it is impossible to get a job without being a ZMP member. The majority take no interest in politics and submit to the political training only because they must. There are, of course, some who have fallen under the influence of Communist propaganda. They are usually boys from the lowest classes of the community, who were extremely poor before the war and have profited by the change of regime. The strongest resistance to Communism is to be found among the sons of farmers and educated people. The sons of unskilled and poor workers are less immune.
- At the most, 25% of the young seamen belonging to the ZMP take Communism seriously and have a certain amount of sympathy for it.
14. "Young people in Poland feel that there is no sense in opposing formal membership in ZMP as such opposition automatically cuts one off from higher education and better jobs. Nobody blames anybody else for joining and mere membership is not regarded as support of Communism. The ideological training accompanying such membership has no influence on the young; the political lectures are hated or regarded as a bore and waste of time.
15. [redacted] since ideological training was introduced in the merchant marine in 1950 [redacted] learn 11 pamphlets practically by heart. That is ideological training of the second degree. For the first degree 24 pamphlets must be studied. The seamen are dead-sick of these pamphlets; each is about 30-35 pages. The politruks treat the seamen like small schoolchildren in elementary school. Being used to more liberty than other classes of the population, the seamen are angry, bored and humiliated by such lessons and the treatment. Nobody is ever allowed to miss a political lecture. Seamen tired after a watch are waked up by politruks and ordered to the messroom.

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16. "The seamen are enlisted in the ZMP as follows: As soon as a young seaman who is not a member is mustered on a ship, he is given a questionnaire to fill in and a ZMP application to sign. In the present state of Poland nobody could refuse to comply. In some cases a man may be invited to participate in a ZMP meeting as a 'guest', after which the application is shoved under his nose for signature. At nautical schools the boys who are not ZMP members find it difficult to pass their examinations. On ships the treatment of non-members is quite different from the treatment of members. The compulsion and the injustice in these methods causes the boys to obey but to hate the regime in their hearts. The Sovietization of the Polish army and the focus on the USSR as an example to Poland on every imaginable occasion calls forth more opposition. Only the fact that there may be Communists, UB agents or informers present keeps the boys from giving open expression to their contempt.
17. "Thanks to foreign radios and their own travels the young seamen are quite well informed about political developments and life in the West. They make one mistake, however: most of them are over-optimistic about the aid Poland may expect from the West.

Coastal Living Conditions

18. "Life in Szczecin is more expensive than in Gdynia and life on the coast, in its turn, is about 50-100 per cent more expensive than in the interior of Poland.

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19. "Railway travel is so expensive today [June 1953] that people are beginning to think it is because the Communists do not want anyone to travel. A 2nd class single ticket Gdynia-Gniezno costs 97 zl. If a seaman's wife comes twice a month to Gdynia to meet her husband, she would have to spend about 300 zl or half her husband's wage. The frequent journeys would, moreover, arouse the suspicion of the police at her place of residence. They would start an investigation to find out where she got all this money. Hence the seamen whose families do not live in Gdynia see their families very seldom.
20. "No seaman moves his family willingly to Szczecin. In the first place the town has a very bad reputation as all sorts of outcasts and anti-social elements have gathered in it and life there is far from secure. Deserters from both the Polish and Soviet armies gather there. Life in the town is not normal. It is difficult to say who is a permanent resident. Police statistics are incomplete. People come and go, disappear without a trace, and the police do not care. Prostitutes abound, in the harbor, at Pogodne, Niebuszewo and Ulica Parkowa. Secondly, the seamen are afraid of the possible return of the Germans. The shipping companies (PLO and PZM) exert all their influence to make the seamen settle there. But many say that they would rather lose their jobs than move their families to this 'Wild West'. Actually, the seamen who get into trouble in Szczecin are largely to blame for their adventures. They spend too much, display their money in public places and are recognizable by their clothes.
21. "The PAFAWAG Pullman cars which traffic the lines Gdynia-Szczecin, Gdynia-Warsaw and Gdynia-Poznan-Gniezno are of rather poor quality and often dirty. They are uncomfortable and carelessly made under the pressure of work norms. Only the sleeping cars are comfortable. Five beds in each Orbis sleeping car are permanently reserved: three for UB and two for CP. The same rule applies in passenger planes. A 2nd class ticket plus sleeping berth from Gdynia to Szczecin costs 165 zl. the ticket alone costs 120 zl in the express trains. On week days the trains are normally full but on holidays they are jammed. People climb in through the windows and travel on the roof.
22. "In contrast to Gdynia where almost all the war damage has been repaired, little has been done in Szczecin. It seems as if the uncertain future of the city is paralyzing all initiative. The best of the houses left standing are occupied by the CP, UB or the Soviets.

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23. "Szczecin has three restaurants with dancing: Magnolia in Ulica Dworcowa, Orbis in Aleja Wojska Polskiego and the restaurant in Dom Towarowy. A visit to these places costs a fortune and no ordinary citizen can afford it. The minimum outlay is 30 zl. This is paid on admittance and deducted from the bill if one spends more. A modest dinner or supper with a 1/4 bottle of cherry brandy costs 160 zl per person or 320 zl. for two. The income of an ordinary citizen is about 700 zl per month. At every restaurant the UB has agents among the waiters, the patrons and the girls. These girls work during the day and come to the restaurants in the evenings alone, or with a girl friend. Their charge is 100-150 zl per night. Sometimes they steal everything their client has. They drink a lot, are often completely drunk. The police not only tolerate but actually encourage them in order to be sure of their cooperation. No city in Poland is so demoralized as Szczecin.
24. "Though the Soviets play such a great part in Poland they are rarely seen on the streets or the public places. They keep to the harbour or their quarters. Their warships are in Swinoujscie, but two to five Soviet cargo ships come to Szczecin every day empty and leave with Polish coal, sugar or grain. As of early summer 1953 the Szczecin shipyard was building nine ships for the Soviets, of about 2700 tons each. Three of these had been launched. No ships for Poland are built in Szczecin. The comment of the population is 'We build ships for the Soviets and in return they take sugar and coal from us.'
25. "About 1951 the Soviets built a four-story house for the families of Soviet officers in Ulica Grunwaldska. The house has several dozen flats, a food shop, and a shop for all kind of utility goods. The Soviets pay in Polish money in this shop. Soviet women are called Paryzanki by the Poles as they are so luxuriously dressed. Those women arrived from the USSR in very modest clothes. In Poland they dress in silk, fox furs and imported nylons.
26. "The control in border zones has intensified during 1953. Particularly severe is the control in Szczecin. Here the UB and WOP are much more suspicious than in Gdansk or Gdynia. The WOP control on ships in Szczecin takes more time and is carried on with more people than in the other Polish ports. In Gdynia the WOP control of ships is done by 6-8 soldiers in two hours. In Szczecin 20 are needed for the same job and take four hours. In Gdynia the harbour is not surrounded by walls and gates. In Szczecin the entire harbour area is enclosed by a special wall. Two WOP soldiers are on guard at the ship. Often women guards are used as watchmen. They are armed with rifles. Sailors have no respect for these female harbour guards. Most of them are prostitutes. They are called by the sailors dziurawa armia. Many sailors have lost their jobs through these women who report them to the WOP or UB. On all holidays the harbour guard is doubled. Many women guards can be bribed with a pair of nylons or a silk handkerchief. They make 400 zloty per month which means that sailors are millionaires compared to these women. Women are also employed in the harbour as tellers, lift workers, transport workers, dock workers. The women working in the harbour are often living in miserable economic conditions and are obliged to make something extra. WOP soldiers are much more disciplined than these women. A WOP soldier will refuse a cigarette from a sailor except when he is sure that nobody will see him taking it.

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